

## Legend of Hercules is action-packed

 By Daniel Dercksen 24 Apr 2014

The Legend of Hercules not only celebrates the glory of classics like Ben Hur, but delivers a sumptuous visual feast that is action-packed entertainment at its best.

From the illustrious narratives of ancient Greek mythology where mortals and gods collide, comes a reimagining of the hero's epic origins. The film approaches Hercules' otherworldly and legendary history from the perspective of a young man struggling with his destiny. It grounds the ubiquitous characterisation of Hercules' superhuman strength and courage by revealing the humanity behind the man.

Featuring super-sexy Kellan Lutz in the title role, who proves that he is indeed one of the finest actors of his generation, the thrilling action adventure comes to life at the hands of producer-director Renny Harlin (who dazzled us with the psychological thriller Mindhunters and, prior to Hercules, tackled the found footage genre with The Devil's Pass).



### Countless tales about the origins of our world

The teachings of Greek mythology have fascinated generations for thousands of years, inspiring countless tales about the origins of our world and the beliefs of ancient Greece. One of the most famous of myths is that of Hercules-the demigod born to a mortal woman and the god Zeus-who is celebrated for his legendary adventures, courageous battles, and resounding victories.

"When I was a little kid, I was really into history, especially the history of ancient Greece," said Harlin. "I remember at school during history class being so interested in studying mythology that I'd draw everything down to the weapons they used and the different architectural details. I became so enthralled by imagining what their world was like." His curiosity and captivation with Greek mythology was the driving force behind this passion project he's described as an incredibly fulfilling experience-one that realised his fantasies of incorporating his childhood visions, and many elements from his favourite films and works of literature. Through substantial research, Harlin brought all of this together in an amalgamation and injected a visually epic scope into the film.

"I really enjoyed the research behind this film-reading books and getting a better understanding of ancient Greece and mythology," said Harlin. "How, in those times, there was a god for everything to help people understand and cope with their world and their lives. If there was a storm, or thunder, death or love-there w

a god to find every purpose."



## **The struggle between fate and free will**

For writers Sean Hood and Daniel Giat, the myth and infamous story of this demigod also spoke to them and drew them to the project. "It's the age-old story of the struggle between fate and free will, between one's responsibility to humanity and one's more personal desires," said Giat. "Is Hercules' foretold role as savior of his people and his homeland a greater calling than his desire and need for his great love? Can both impulses be fulfilled in life? I think those questions are drama's greatest theme."

Harlin's passion for the story fuelled Giat's imagination. "Renny's excitement and enthusiasm was infectious," said Giat. "He was truly enthralled with each new idea I proposed, freeing my creativity in a way rarely experienced."

In his research the filmmaker was especially intrigued by the influence Hercules' story has had on many of today's superheroes. "Whether in comic books, in modern literature, or even today's blockbuster heroes—there are threads of Hercules' story," said Harlin. "He's always been the ultimate superhero throughout history."

However, the filmmaker was interested in telling a story that did not simply recount the same myths told over time, but instead wanted to provide a counter perspective focusing on the man. "People can already picture Hercules as this huge, muscular man who goes around doing superhuman things—but we really wanted to break away from that and introduce audiences to Hercules as a young man who is conflicted with his identity," said Harlin. "We're starting from the very beginning of Hercules coming to terms with who he is. And at the heart of our film, is actually a love story that shows his range of emotions as a man."

For the role of Hercules, which has been reprised over the years by many, Harlin wanted to cast an actor who people could really embrace as a fresh, new face—and someone who could take the character of Hercules and make it his own.



## The perfect fit

"All of the actors had to feel right for this kind of historical film. I didn't want them to feel too modern and we were lucky enough to find, for every role, just the perfect fit."

Kellan Lutz recalls his connection to the role of Hercules also began as a young boy with a wild imagination living on a farm. "Hercules represents so much to me, and it was always something as a kid growing up on farm I'd dreamt about playing," said Lutz. "Once Renny had the script I wanted to meet him, and I almost felt like if I bugged him enough, and showed him how much this part meant to me, that I'd get the role. So I auditioned for him and he saw something in me, and here I am today just living that little boy's dream."

The infamous character of Hercules instantly came to life for Lutz when he put on the costume and walked onto the grand sets.

"You walk into these incredible soundstages and you see the other actors wearing these amazing costumes and the acting just comes naturally from that point," said Lutz.

"Throughout the film, Hercules is on this greater journey of finding his identity and becoming the man that he is promised to be," said Lutz. "And in the end he accepts his responsibility as a sort of Robin Hood to the people-fighting injustice with justice to bring honour to his mother, his loved ones, his kingdom and to take his rightful place as this demigod."

The character required the actor to prepare and train for the demanding physicality of his role. The actor

chose to perform most of his own stunts and, prior to beginning the film, trained with a Bulgarian stunt team and his stunt doubles.

Lutz trained for three weeks on sword fighting, horseback riding, spear throwing, and chains for his many battle scenes. "I love doing stunts and action films, which is the genre I've chosen as an actor," said Lutz. "Some of the combat is of a grand scale, while other is hand to hand and I've really put all of myself into all of these scenes, with some scars to prove it. With such a great stunt team led by Rowley Llam, I felt really prepared for every fight scene-it's been fun every day."

For those looking for first-rate entertainment that will blow you away, particularly in its spectacular 3D, The Legend of Hercules will not disappoint on any level.

Read more about this film and other new releases at [www.writingstudio.co.za/page1037.html](http://www.writingstudio.co.za/page1037.html).

## ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and the journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit [www.writingstudio.co.za](http://www.writingstudio.co.za) View my profile and articles...

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